TELLS THE FACTS AND NAMES THE NAMES

CounterPunch

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Clinton, the woman: Not a feminist candidate

By Ruth Blader

With the primaries now under way, some people will misguidedly vote for Hillary Clinton for the same reason that others will not: because she's a woman. We saw this in New Hampshire: women cast their lot with "Clinton, the woman", many believing that they were taking a feminist stand. However, equating Hillary Clinton's (or anyone's) sex with her status as a feminist betrays the same ordinary ignorance that helps to conceal institutional sexism and discrimination. It predicates the notion that all women are both feminine and feminists, and that if something is acceptable to some woman somewhere, then it is both tainted by femininity and not sexist, representing all women.

On the important issues, Hillary Clinton is not a feminist. She refuses to stand up to the big money and big corporations whose stranglehold on America makes life so difficult for most Americans, and especially families.

Her healthcare plan, a rhetoric-wrapped accident waiting to fail, is a prime example. Its certain failure lies in its inability to address the real problems, the medical industrial complex, and support a simple, universal, single-payer system. Its certain failure is not "an idea" for the estimated 47 million uninsured people or for the uncounted underinsured Americans, for whom Clinton's plan offers no great choice. Women are our society's primary healthcare decision makers, and the failure of this initiative will be, like caring for children and the elderly, their burden.

Consider Clinton's stand on abortion: not very courageous in the context of the

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Making a Killing: Girl Deaths and Land Deals on the U.S. –Mexico Border

By Debbie Nathan

Lots of Americans have heard about the Mexican city Juarez, just across the river from El Paso, Texas, and the 400 or so female murders that have happened there since the 1990s. Many who've heard have flown to the border to hold press conferences and make movies or put on plays and offer help. Especially women – including famous ones such as Jane Fonda, J. Lo, Sally Fields, Minnie Driver, Eve Ensler – all know of the killings, or at least those involving long-haired adolescents who worked in maquiladoras – assembly plants – and went to church and were good daughters before they ended up in places like Lomas del Poleo as anal-raped corpses, sometimes with nothing in the way of clothing but a tattered bra.

Lomas del Poleo: some godforsaken desert neighborhood on the Juarez fringe where many bodies have been found. Most never identified, but one was Veronica Castro, a teen working at a big, foreign-owned assembly plant when she disappeared. The corpse of another girl, Maria Sagrario Gonzalez, was found elsewhere, but at the time she was killed she lived in Lomas. Her mom, Paula Flores, is the first person who thought of blanketing Juarez utility poles with pink crosses to draw attention to the murders. As a result of such activism, the murders have come, internationally, to be known as femicide. Embedded in that term is the idea that women are dying violently in Juarez precisely because they're women. It's a political concept, a theory, and thus awful but in its abstraction oddly comfortable.

The killing fields at Lomas del Poleo, on the other hand, are a hundred per cent real, and straight-out scary to even think about. Don't go there, the zeitgeist whispers: it's isolated, desolated, gritty, a place only for seasoned journalists, while the rest of us can just read about it and maybe march downtown with the stars, or sign Amnesty International petitions.

Back in 2002, I did a piece in the *Texas Observer* that attempted to look beyond widespread and wild speculation about the Juarez murders and instead face reality. Ever since the killings became a public issue in 1995, stories have been coursing through the community and media – both local and international – that they're the work of a serial killer, Satanists, organ traffickers, and sexual deviants in Mexico's federal police or government. When I wrote the *Observer* article, about 280 women had been murdered in Juarez; of those, some 80 were found dumped in the desert, killed in a number of brutal ways. It was clear that the ghastly killing wave stemmed from several causes, but the main one was change in the culture of Juarez, related to the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Before the early 1990s, when the push for free trade started gathering steam, there was plenty of brutality against Juarez women but practically no murders, not even during incidents of sexual assault or domestic violence. By NAFTA's debut in 1994, however, the city was experiencing overwhelming social dislocation due to its newfound status as "Queen of the Maquiladoras". Managers of foreign assembly plants preferred female labor over male. For the first time in Mexican history hundreds of thousands of young women were out of the house, earning their own money, and less under the domestic thumb of men. Simultaneously,

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Democratic presidential hopefuls, who are all tuned in to the fact that abortion is a mainstream healthcare choice directly affected a huge slice of the population. Any of the serious Democratic candidates will likely do the minimum to protect what's left of reproductive freedom in America. None appears inspired to do much more.

Despite the historical association of the women's movement's with organized labor, Clinton's "innovation agenda" includes nothing to protect workers from globalization and outsourcing. Her overtures are addressed to corporations, which might see tax credits for relocating R&D facilities, and big government grants, especially in the sciences and defense industry.

Like all the candidates, Clinton drives a hard bargain for immigrants, while throwing a bone to the corporations, especially to the big agribusinesses, which exploit them. Some lucky illegals might get to join the US army... The "speak English" crowd can rest assured that Clinton is on their side. She wants to unite "lawful immigrants" with spouses and children to "sanctify families," but she doesn't seem overly concerned with the underlying exploitation and inequalities that encourage mass immigration.

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Despite the fact that women are primarily responsible for nourishing American families, the quality of the nation's food and, specifically, the atrocities against nutrition and the environment wrought by big agriculture are not on Clinton's radar. Her environmental platform involves giving corporations unneeded tax breaks and enhancing middle-class "green" consumption. The concept of real regulation being supplanted by government research features prominently in Clinton's agenda.

It's unlikely, however, that street criminals will enjoy such a lenient bargain. Clinton's platform does not touch those criminal justice issues that disproportionately affect women, like the "war on drugs", or like the fact that there are over 2 million Americans in jail or prison. If – like many women attempting to prove that they're not feminist troublemakers – she adopts a "tough" stance, Clinton will be doing so, like her husband, at the expense of our communities.

Like all the other candidates, Clinton pays lip service to women (coded in a "strong stand" on choice), but doesn't extend a feminist ethic to any issue that might hinder her relationship with business.

Perhaps it is this predicament, trying to prove how "un-womanly" she is, that has landed Clinton in her campaign's deepest quagmire: her position on the war in Iraq, and her foreign policy platform in general. Over the years, Clinton has proven to be among the most hawkish democrats. But, recognizing patterns of subordination, genuine feminists repudiate imperial conflict. Conscious of the proliferation of rape in war, the devastating effects of civilian deaths and infrastructure damage, and the violence, often against women, committed by men suffering from war trauma, authentic feminists oppose war. Women in America have been the most long-standing, prominent, and vocal protestors against the war in Iraq. Clinton's position is thus inconsistent with real feminist values and out of touch with the electorate.

On more controversial feminist issues, like prostitution, pornography, institutional sexism, and daycare, forget about Hillary Clinton. Like Obama running away from black militancy, Hillary Clinton's campaign largely ignored women until her loss in Iowa. The press is clamoring about "Hillary, the woman" because they can finally tell the predictable jilted "ex-girlfriend" and weak-and-weepy-in-the-face-of-danger story. And Clinton likes it, because at least everyone seems to have moved on from her Iowa loss.

In light of the general shallowness of presidential campaign coverage, the press' current fascination with "the emotional Clinton" isn't even that sexist. Al Gore, the "wooden" snoozer; Dukakis, the midget – presidential politics is a demeaning business. As women's issues get increasing coverage with Clinton's feminine transformation, the real disappointment is that, if not for Clinton's campaign, as usual, women would hardly exist.

Diving into the fray, Gloria Steinem explained in the *New York Times* why she's supporting Clinton: "I'm supporting Senator Clinton because like Senator Obama she has community organizing experience, but she also has more years in the Senate, an unprecedented eight years of on-the-job training in the White House, no masculinity to prove, the potential to tap a huge reservoir of this country's talent by her example, and now even the courage to break the no-tears rule."

Those are bad reasons. Like all the other candidates, Clinton pays lip service to women (coded in a "strong stand" on choice), but doesn't extend a feminist ethic to any issue that might hinder her relationship with business.

So, she won't get creamed for standing up to corporate interests and demanding a real social safety net, real business regulation, and an end to violent attempts at economic domination abroad. Ultimately, Clinton's betrayal of a coherent feminist political platform will be for naught. Despite her New Hampshire victory, it's likely she'll lose in the end, also for the wrong reason: because she's a woman. **CP**

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The One-State Illusion: More is Less

By Michael Neumann

The one-state solution is an attractive ideal mistaken for a live option.

Most of the arguments for the one-state solution are not arguments about whether it's possible. They are arguments about whether the solution is just, and the two-state solution unjust.

These arguments establish the obvious. Of course the two-state solution is unjust. It cements Zionist usurpation of Palestinian land. It lets the perpetrators of this usurpation go scot-free, without so much as compensation for their victims. Worst of all, it perpetuates a state based on racial supremacy. Israel's notion of Jewishness, the determinant of who should hold sovereignty, is ultimately biological. It is based on kinship. In practice, this kinship does not, as in other countries, depend on tracing family lines back to residence in the sovereign state but simply on closeness to anyone considered "Jewish", in the racial sense of the term.

What then of the one-state solution? I hear it's very just indeed. But what is it, exactly? Apparently, it speaks of a society in which Jews and Palestinians enjoy the same democratic rights. One Jew, one vote; one Palestinian, one vote.

In at least one respect, this sort of one-state solution is *less* just than the two-state solution. That's because it leaves "Jewish property", including the settlements, in place. Some advocates of the one-state solution are explicit about this, though they never seem to mention it when criticizing the two-state solution. Others are silent on the matter of the settlements, or make vague references to adjudication – not a promising way to expel committed fanatics.

A just one-state solution has not been proposed by anyone engaged in the one-state/two-state debate. I'm not sure anyone in recent memory, including the Hamas leadership, has proposed it. A just solution would essentially repair the injustice done by Zionism. This would require far more than a democratic "binational" state in Palestine. It would require that the Jews who came as Zionists to Palestine leave, and with them their descendants. (This is not ethnic cleansing; the original Jewish population and their descendants would remain.) Beyond this, it would require that massive compensation, in the billions, be paid to Palestinians who lost their homes and livelihoods. This compensation would have to remedy not only dispossession, essentially a crime against property, but also all the deaths and agonies the Palestinians have suffered because of the Zionist project. There would have to be criminal proceedings against thousands of Israelis who have committed human rights violations, and convictions would have to involve further compensatory payments. Israeli firms that profited from and/or supported the occupation be subject to yet further punitive and compensatory damages.

One-staters apparently believe that Israel will give up the reason for its existence and at the same time expose itself not to the risk but to the certainty of being "swamped by Arabs".

Such a state would right, as much as possible, the wrongs of the Israel-Palestine conflict, but that of course doesn't mean the one state would be a just state. If one-state proponents are really so big on justice, why does it sound as if all we need is a single Palestinian state and justice will be done? Shouldn't we be hearing about justice for poor and the marginalized in this wonderful new future? Does resolving an ethnic conflict somehow ensure economic and social justice for all?

Is this *too much* justice? Either one-staters are as serious about justice as they claim to be, or they're not. If they are, then they should be addressing all types of injustice in Palestine. But if they are willing to sacrifice justice to practicality, then it's time to consider what's practicable and what isn't.

The two-state solution, despite some nonsense about the settlers being "too deeply entrenched", is practicable. If Israel withdraws and the Palestinians get a sovereign state, the settlers will leave in a large hurry, just like the settlers who swore they would die before quitting Gaza. And a two-state solution will, indeed, leave Palestinians with a sovereign state, because that's what a two-state solution means. It doesn't mean one state and another non-state, and no Palestinian proponent of a two-state solution will settle for less than sovereignty.

This is not, by any means, to say that Israel will agree to a genuinely sovereign Palestinian state. But that's just why the idea that Israel would concede a single state is laughable. It is one thing to vacate the settlements. They represent and benefit a smallish minority of Israelis. For many more Israelis, they are a great big headache. The occupation is expensive; it earns Israel near-universal opprobrium; it requires semi-open borders, which constrain security arrangements; above all it requires Israel to spread its forces all over the landscape rather than concentrate them for efficient military operations.

The two-state solution is practicable because many Israelis can accept it. It doesn't challenge what Israel is all about; indeed, that is the moralistic objection to two states. Israel is a Jewish state; it is committed to that. One-staters apparently believe that Israel will give up the reason for its existence and at the same time expose itself not to the risk but to the certainty of being "swamped by Arabs". This, in turn, would indicate a willingness to accede to anything an "Arab" majority might enact, including a full right of return and dispossession of Zionist usurpers. Can anyone seriously imagine this? If it took thousands of lives and many years to get the settlements out of Gaza – not Israel, which is still sovereign there, but only the settlements – how long is it supposed to take before Israel gives up its existence, its rationale, and the security of all its Jewish citizens?

Well, never mind the time constraints. Maybe two-staters are too soft, too eager to see that ordinary Palestinians in the occupied territories are freed from their agonies. Suppose, in the leisurely, bloody, starvation-ridden fullness of time, a single state gets implemented. Then we come to the oddest illusion of all: that if you put two antagonistic peoples to-

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gether in one state, their antagonism will vanish. Why? What issues are resolved? Will Palestinians and Jews cease to compete for state power? Will Israeli Jews, because they have lost their Jewish state, feel disposed to hand over their homes and businesses as well? Does binationalism turn men into angels?

Recent history suggests otherwise. The binational state that bears closest comparison with Palestine is Lebanon, where many Palestinians now live. Even subtracting the toll exacted by Israeli invasions, the carnage there has exceeded by orders of magnitude that of the entire Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The most encouraging examples of binational states, Belgium and Czechoslovakia, are now dissolved or on the brink of dissolution. Then there is, or was, Yugoslavia. Is there such warmth between Israeli Jews and Palestinians that we may expect a better outcome there than in these countries?

The fact is that a single state guarantees nothing. Notoriously, the democratic process does not ensure that the will of the majority really prevails. Dominant economic groups know how to confuse, divide and conquer. They may well, through a mixture of bribery and manipulation, remain dominant – why, in this day and age, does this need saying? In Palestine, the dominant economic group is composed of Israeli Jews. They may well push for further expansion of the settlements. This expansion may well be reinforced by a repressive *binational* state apparatus, with a permanent presence all over the occupied territories – where, in the name of justice, no square inch will be retained for exclusively Palestinian use. Yes, there will be Palestinians in Haifa and Tel Aviv, just as there are today. There will also be Jews in Nablus, Jenin, and Ramallah; as well as everywhere else they can buy land from distressed Palestinians. This does not necessarily make for a love feast.

It is no good promising that all the nice stuff will come later. How? Presumably, a single state is supposed to bring justice – not after mass slaughter but after elections. Really? Will millions of Jews just leave if a majority says they should? Will they agree to crushing compensatory payments? Will they also agree to be sued or imprisoned for exercising what they consider their rights to self-determination and even survival? If not, if the one-staters actually are thinking of a bloodbath, they should let us know, and tell us why they think a bloodbath will really bring justice to the Palestinians.

Against all this, one-staters keep repeating that a single state is just. If appeals to justice were enough to get the Israelis to abolish Israel, there would never have been a problem in the first place. Perhaps, that is why the most recent expression of one-state ideology, The One State Declaration, does not answer a single one of the hard questions the one-state solution raises.

For example, most Palestinian property in Israel is now occupied by Jews, who firmly believe they have a right to their homes. Will these people be expelled, or not? Another example: will the settlers be kicked out of their settlements? Will they be disarmed? By what army? Will Zionists be expelled from the armed forces? How? Not a whisper of an answer is to be found. Instead, we get generalities. Perhaps, this is why neither Fatah nor Hamas, who together must represent roughly 100 per cent of the Palestinians in the occupied territories, have no time for binationalism.

The two-state solution offers that state on terms the Israelis might be induced to accept. There is no chance at all they will accept a single state that gives the Palestinians anything remotely like their rights.

That dispossessed Palestinians have a right of return is beyond obvious. It is equally obvious that we should all love one another and gather all the poor and oppressed into our bosom. What is less obvious is what should be done about it.

It is said that the two-state solution renounces the right of return. This confuses the solution itself with the words that may accompany it. Indeed, any agreement establishing a Palestinian state might involve the Palestinian representatives asserting such a renunciation. Both morals and historical realities put any such assertions in proper perspective.

Morally, the right of return is not some contractual entitlement, like a royalty agreement, that you can just renounce, any more than you can just renounce your right to free speech. If you have it, it stays with you. Besides, the Palestinian leaders cannot on their own initiative annul the rights of the Palestinians themselves. Most important, in the real world, verbal renunciations don't stand up to changing power relations.

For now, Israel will not honor a Palestinian right of return; to "demand" it is the emptiest of gestures. That right will be honored only if the Palestinians become powerful enough to enforce it. If or when that happens, the fact that some leaders verbally renounced the right will count for nothing. The Palestinians will be free to say: this was never our will; this was a renunciation obtained under duress; those who renounced it should not have done so. Or, more simply: we may have renounced that right, but now things are different. Right or no right, we want to go back to our homes, and we will apply pressure to return. History is full of paper renunciations that, when times change, lose every iota of their force.

The longing for a single state is all too understandable, but the single-state ideology is not. It places a reliance on good will and moral argument that I find incomprehensible. Perhaps, this veneer of optimism covers an unwillingness to recognize that violence, justified or not, has brought results – the evacuation of the Gaza settlements and Israel's willingness to contemplate more evacuations. Moral appeals, on the other hand, have brought nothing whatever.

Thousands of Palestinians suffered, sacrificed, even died for a sovereign Palestinian state. The two-state solution offers that state on terms the Israelis might conceivably be induced to accept. There is no chance at all they will accept a single state that gives the Palestinians anything remotely like their rights.

In the name of realism, one-state ideologues abandon the goal of Palestinian sovereignty to pursue an illusion: that the Israelis will give all of Palestine to the Palestinians, yet inhabit all of Palestine as well. If others fight for a smaller but genuinely Palestinian state, they are called sellouts, collaborators, or cowards. Should this one-state propaganda barrage have any effect, it will be to fragment the Palestinians and get them not more, but less. **CP**

Michael Neumann's *The Case Against Israel* is available from CounterPunch Books. Call 1-800-840-3683 or order online through www.counterpunch.org .

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The violence is unprecedented in its frequency and brutality. In Juarez until the early 1990s, it was exceedingly rare for a woman to be murdered in any way, by anyone. Then suddenly, right around the advent of NAFTA in 1994, female corpses were everywhere.

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Juarez chafed under its traditional reputation as the bordello of Mexico. That old reputation combined with new tensions to create a culture of sadistic contempt for women. In an instant – after a quarrel or a breakup, for instance – they could be classed as "whores" and fatally beaten or otherwise killed by lovers, spouses, pimps and cops.

It's in this context that we should look at Lomas del Poleo, a Juarez neighborhood which has had a terrible harvest of slaughtered women – to date at least a dozen.

A professor took me to Lomas years ago, when the femicides were fresh news. She was studying the concept of border women as waste matter, in concert with the generalized phenomenon of illegal municipal dumping. Her theory included the fact that Juarez maquiladoras – assembly plants – were organized and managed so the entire, mostly female workforce at the average plant would quit or be fired from their jobs – or "turn over", the industry calls it – in less than a year. Massive turnover would quickly and efficiently dispense with labor once it was deemed worn-out, or too expensive because of employers' legal obligation after several months to give workers perks like health insurance and end-of-year bonuses. The professor felt that the maquiladora economy of female worker disposability was affecting the entire culture and that increasingly in Juarez all women were being defined as throwaways. That attitude, she said, was fueling the murders, and not just of dozens of long-haired, stranger-raped teens, who are the only victims the press and Hollywood ever pay attention to.

And the professor had ideas about why so many of the bodies were ending up in the desert. She did not think it reflected some serial killer's unique mode of operation. Because municipal sanitation services are so lacking in Juarez, she said, everything unwanted – from household trash to human beings – gets thrown, sub rosa, in the outskirts. We poked with our eyes and some sticks in this parched, garbage-strewn place called Lomas del Poleo, where corpses had recently been discovered. We found only withered shoes, soiled Pampers, and bleached baby dolls. Not unexpected, the professor said. What surprised me – I still remember after all this time – was the old man who ambled from behind a hill on a burro, herding goats and smilingly doffing his hat to wish us a good day. "Where on earth did he come from?" I thought. Heretofore, I'd assumed Lomas del Poleo was just some vacant hellhole. Now I wondered if there was more to it. Then I forgot the man, and Lomas. I moved away to the U.S. interior.

But last month I was visiting El Paso. Another friend, a border community activist, took me to a meeting in a sparsely furnished green building across the river, with no heat and everyone huddled in jackets and soberly talking in turn. Some were students from downtownish Juarez who had nice glasses and OK wardrobes. Others were "colonos"– that is, the flea-market dressed residents of Lomas, many of whom have lived there over 30 years. They'd walked a mile down from a mesa to reach the cold green building because they are not allowed to hold public gatherings in their own neighborhood. Nor can they bring in friends or guests for meetings or anything else resembling politics. To enter their own community for whatever reason, they must pass a guardhouse staffed by snickering male thugs with guns.

The thug checkpoint and all the rest of Lomas are enclosed by concrete posts, barbed wire and trained dogs. People cannot pass unless they live inside. Trucks supplying basics such as tortillas, water and milk are also disallowed. At the meeting in the green building, I talked with two women who appeared in their seventies. One was stringy and gnarled; the other squat, with white, lusterless hair like cheap twine. They both lurched slightly with old age or fatigue. They said there used to be many stores up in Lomas, but now hardly any remain. To get groceries each day, they must walk the mile downhill, then make their way back to the armed punks and wire and canines.

Sometimes, when people leave the area to get food, or to work in maquiladoras, they return and find their houses razed to rubble by bulldozers. One of the women said this happened to her middle-aged son, and it made him so apoplectic and heartbroken that he died. She described such things and wouldn't let me take her photo or use her name. She and her neighbor were terrified of reprisals. Their fear sickened me.

This is all going on a few miles from El Paso, Texas, just across the border from Barnes & Noble, Starbucks, and the bikini waxing spas of upper Mesa Street. What is happening in Lomas del Poleo is not unlike the logistics and doings of a concentration camp. Yet, practically no one in the U.S. – even those who've marched for and donated to and worried about the murdered women – seems to know or care.

The barbed wire and dogs point us away from serial killer conspiracies, Satanic rituals, and the black market vending of kidneys and toward something grayer, and more familiar: the greed and ruthlessness associated with real estate speculation. Deeds and mortgages are not quite the stuff of cult killings. But these topics – land and law – are the underpinnings of the border's little modern-day terror zone. To understand the awful things I heard and saw at that community meeting last month, I've explored the web, talked with people, including Lomas residents and organizers, and watched documentaries on Youtube. This is what I've learned.

It goes back to 1945. That's when the Mexican government seized thousands of acres of desert from a mining company just south of the border, not far from the West Side of El Paso and what is now the town Sunland Park, New Mexico. Shortly after this expropriation, corrupt, profiteering Mexican bureaucrats sold the property to private owners, though doing so was illegal. These owners sold their tracts to others. One eventual purchaser was a prominent Juarez businessman, Pedro Zaragoza Sr.

Years later, in 1975, Mexico's President Luis Echeverria declared part of this vast acreage to be federal land. Now things were really confused, because the boundaries of the national holdings were not surveyed: they were still mixed with areas that private buyers – including Zaragoza – considered their property.

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Even so, the problem seemed inconsequential. President Echeverria notified the private purchasers that if they wanted to argue he'd wrongly designated their holdings as federal land, they should file legal claims. No claims ensued. Apparently, the buyers didn't care one way or the other because the land was considered scrubby, remote, and of little worth.

But not all felt this way. In the early 1970s, fifty or sixty poor families came to a mesa they named Granjas Lomas del Poleo – Poleo Hills Farms – in search of somewhere to settle. Most had earlier immigrated to Juarez from destitute rural areas farther south. They wanted to escape urban chaos and raise goats, pigs and chickens. Word got out about Lomas, and one man appointed himself community leader. He helped new settlers pick out five-acre plots, where they built houses, grazed animals, and tilled the land.

Eventually, Lomas boasted about a thousand inhabitants, a small church, a kindergarten, a grade school, and some ten stores. The community was still parched and desertified, and many homes were little more than hodgepodges of wood pallets, with rusted box springs for front yard fences. But the view was gorgeous: to the east, a long range of mountains; on the west, the majestic peak topped with a giant statue of Christ. Residents knew there was an issue about exactly which land in the area was federal and which was already privately owned, but they weren't much concerned. According to Mexican law since the Revolution, if land is unoccupied and undeveloped, poor people can gain title just by living on it a few years, as long as the owner does not dispute their tenancy. This is normal in Mexico. Indeed, according to those familiar with Lomas, many residents went to government agencies and courts and got papers recognizing them as owners of their tiny plots.

The affable man on the burro whom I ran into years before was one of these Lomas people.

But in the late 1990s, big, private owners like Pedro Zaragoza's widow and sons – one of them also named Pedro – realized Lomas was getting valuable. Real estate interests on both sides of the border were hatching grand plans for a new international port of entry and a NAFTA-esque, binational community. This would straddle the international line at Santa Teresa, New Mexico, and include extensive manufacturing parks, as well as passage for cargo trucks and lots of brand new housing and stores.

As Juarez attorney Carlos Avitia has since explained to the Paso Del Sur community activist organization in El Paso, Mexican entrepreneurs like the Zaragozas decided their city's growth would take place on outskirts that include Lomas del Poleo. "These are huge investors", notes Avitia. "They plan to turn this into a suburb… All of a sudden, they're very interested in every last sand dune".

Indeed, since the 1990s a highway has been built, linking the Mexican state of Chihuahua west of Juarez to New Mexico's Santa Teresa, where all that transborder development is set to take place. So far, very few people live in Santa Teresa, but its port of entry has been operating for years now. And, in late 2007, part of yet another big road opened in northwest Juarez. Called the Camino Real – the Royal Road in English – it has so far cost almost a million U.S. dollars, and, when it is done, it will connect downtown Juarez to Santa Teresa. Right across from Santa Teresa will be a Mexican twin town called Jeronimo. The two will be foreign trade zones, with people living in them. The spanking new development is currently almost uninhabited. But it's projected to grow to 100,000 residents in the next decade or so.

Managers of foreign assembly plants preferred female labor over male. For the first time in Mexican history thousands of young women were earning their own money and less under the domestic thumb of men.

The two main developers of Jeronimo and Santa Teresa are, respectively, Eloy Vallina – one of Mexico's richest entrepreneurs – and Bill Sanders, a major international realtor who heads a controversial redevelopment plan for downtown El Paso. It aims to replace acres of historic but run-down buildings, mom-and-pop shops, and poor residents with big box stores, mall-type businesses, and mixed-income housing that will not provide public rental subsidies for the many undocumented immigrants, who currently live in the area.

Vallina is a member of Sanders' development group for Santa Teresa. His son, Eloy Jr., sits on the board of a private consortium, which sprang the redevelopment plan on El Paso two years ago and has since provoked great controversy there. Vallina Sr.'s plans for the foreign trade zone Jeronimo are as strongly contested in Juarez as Sanders' designs for El Paso are on the north side of the border.

Jeronimo opponents note that because the development is so dependent on massive infrastructure – like the Camino Real highway – public taxes and resources are improperly being diverted from Juarez to one man's private suburb. A major concern is the future of municipal water. The bolson that supplies Juarez is running out, and the only way to recharge it is from another aquifer, which sits beneath Jeronimo. But if that water is pumped by Vallina's project, Juarez won't get it and the city could go dry.

Also troubling is that anticipation about Jeronimo and Santa Teresa has led to fevered land speculation in Juarez, according to New Mexico State University's Frontera News Service. Tiny lots, not far from Lomas del Poleo, have lately increased by 26 times their original price, with buyers offering as much as $39,000 for each parcel. The Juarez real estate explosion really took off when Bill Sanders bought 21,000 acres in Santa Teresa and announced his binational development project. This happened in 2003.

Perhaps not coincidentally, 2003 is also the year when formerly peaceful Lomas del Poleo – walking distance from the tidy, democratic United States of America – started to resemble an armed camp, a zone in the Palestinian territories, a World War II ghetto, a place of chilling violation of civil and human rights.

Two years ago, a soft-spoken, understated-looking fellow named Bill Morton wrote a piece for the online newsletter of Annunciation House, a church-based refuge for undocumented migrants in downtown El Paso. Morton is a Catholic missionary and priest – thoroughly gringo – who at the time was pastoring a little church in Lomas. In his article, he describes hearing rumors there in 2003 that he, at first, didn't think made sense.

Just a year earlier, the government had

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Still they stay, insisting on their right to the land. They have lawyers and their suit against the Zaragozas. Attorney Avitia has worked extensively on the case. He says the law is on the Lomas residents' side and eventually they will win.

finally – after over three decades – supplied Lomas with electricity. Posts and wires had been installed, and each house had a meter. Now, residents were telling Morton they heard that all this infrastructure was slated to be removed. Morton pooh-poohed their worries. Why would the government take out what it had so carefully put in just months ago?

But the rumors were correct. Lomas residents and the Zaragoza family were already in court disputing who owned the land. One Zaragoza, Pedro Jr., recently told former *Texas Observer* reporter and Pulitzer Prize winner Eileen Welsome that he considers Lomas inhabitants nothing but illegal squatters and land speculators. To up the ante and discourage occupancy of the area, the Zaragozas had gone to a judge and obtained a ruling to remove the utilities. Government trucks came in, accompanied by police. They pulled out all the posts and wires. Lomas was left without light, refrigerators, or fans.

The Zaragozas also obtained orders forbidding more building in Lomas so that new people wouldn't come to live there, and current residents, unable to improve their homes, would feel pressured to leave. More ominously, existing housing was targeted for destruction. Soon after the electricity was removed, scores of menacing young men invaded the community. They were what Mexicans call guardias blancas, "white guards" – privately contracted paramilitary goons. Their boss is Catarino del Rio, who in the past has worked for the Zaragozas and is assumed to be on their payroll now. The thugs brought in heavy equipment, which residents assumed would be used to destroy their homes.

At first, people in Lomas dug ditches to block the tractors and demolition machinery. Complaints were also made to the Juarez police, who ordered the shock troops out. They left but by spring 2004 were back, occupying a plot of land and building a camp with a watch tower, barbed wire, and a guard house. Ever since, Lomas residents have had to pass this checkpoint to enter their neighborhood – which is now completely fenced in by tall, concrete poles and wire. Many people complain that the guards have maced and kicked residents. They demolished a church and are said to have poisoned pet dogs. They've prowled around in the dark and shone flashlights into houses. People who leave to buy groceries or go to work come back to find their homes pulverized.

Some residents report that the guards carry AK-47s; others have seen rifles sticking out of their jackets. In Mexico, it's illegal for civilians to carry arms, never mind military-grade weapons. But when the Juarez police have been called, they've done nothing. A resident got into a fight with Zaragoza's thugs after a house was razed. He was fatally beaten. Not long afterward, a home caught fire. Two small children burned to death. Authorities and Pedro Zaragoza said the conflagration was due to a stove left lit when the mother went out, or to illegal electricity hookups connected to a line some distance away from the house. Witnesses countered that the house had no power, and that Zaragoza goons had been seen walking around, possibly spilling gasoline, just before the home ignited.

Juarez's city administration does nothing about these outrages. Indeed, it supports the Zaragozas by encouraging Lomas' shell-shocked residents to move. Many families have gone to another community downhill. Others have been relocated to a row of tiny, concrete structures that the city offers as alternative housing but which provide no land for the livestock raising and horticulture that residents practiced on their own holdings. Juarez lawyer Avitia has noted that the Juarez politicians have a stake in supporting the eviction project. They are friends and associates of real estate entrepreneurs like the Zaragozas and Eloy Vallina. (Eileen Wellsome interviewed Juarez Mayor Hector Murguia, who confirmed that he and Pedro Zaragoza are friends.) Eviction helps the magnates by freeing up land for development related to Jeronimo, Vallina's golden goose, just south of Santa Teresa.

Lomas del Poleo, once poor but bustling, has lost three-fourths of its population and almost all its stores since the goons came in. About 55 families soldier on, braving the constant threat of their houses being demolished and the nerve-wracking sense that they and their community are being disposed of, and few care. Still they stay, insisting on their right to the land. They have attorneys and their lawsuit against the Zaragozas. Attorney Avitia has worked extensively on the case. He says the law is on the Lomas residents' side and eventually they will win.

But in an escalating battle of one-upsmanship, the better the legal proceedings go for Lomas del Poleo inhabitants, the worse they are pressured to leave. Lately, political groups and NGOs from both sides of the border have been trying to help. Attempts to hold organizing events in the neighborhood several weeks ago were met with the paramilitaries and their weapons, dogs, pushing and shoving and threats.

At the meeting I attended in the green building downhill, I asked if someone would take me up to see things. "We can't", I was told. "It's too dangerous".

Amid this state of siege, it also seems risky to discuss the one thing that has brought international human rights attention to Juarez: those murdered, thrown

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away women. The people I spoke with at the meeting were like everyone who's held on in Lomas – militant, determined to make a stand. But they also appear so demoralized and desperate to save their homes that they are willing to renounce the dead girls dumped on their turf.

I asked both the old women I talked with about the female corpses found in Lomas starting in the late 1990s. "Oh, no!" one demurred. "Didn't happen". "Lies!" the other added sternly. "There were no bodies here. Ever".

I recounted this conversation later with my friend the activist, who explained the old women's reaction. So many things have been done by the pro-eviction forces to discredit Lomas, he said. Depicting it as a crime-ridden slum. A dirty place that needs cleaning and vacuuming, even of its residents. What better way to bolster that claim than to talk of corpses in the sand? That's one reason Lomas inhabitants deny the fact of the female dead.

My friend also pointed out that city and state government in Juarez and Chihuahua have for long been on a campaign to make people and social organizations feel guilty for speaking up about the murdered women and trying to connect their fate with other social problems. The old women, he said, "show how this campaign has permeated all walks of life". Their silence is understandable.

Understandable, but especially horrid, because to shut up about femicide, Lomas residents must even mute their own blood. Take the white-haired lady I talked to. Early in our conversation, she said her son died after his home was demolished by Zaragoza's thugs. Later, she grew more expansive. "It wasn't just the house", she confided. "It was also that his child – my 18-year-old granddaughter – disappeared four years ago. Went out one day with her boyfriend and was never seen again. The police found her ID card in the boyfriend's pocket. But he works for the government. He was never charged or prosecuted. My son couldn't do a thing. He lost his house and his daughter. Both losses killed him".

Please, Jane Fonda, Eve Ensler, J. Lo, Amnesty, and everyone who signed petitions, put on performances and marched for the dead girls of Juarez. Come back and memorialize those murdered women in a constructive way.

We know what happened to the house. But how about the daughter? Like Veronica Castro, Maria Sagrario Gonzalez, and so many others, was she tossed in the sand? Somewhere just a skip and a jump from Mesa Street, El Paso, and Sunland Park, U.S.A.?

Please, Jane Fonda, Eve Ensler, J. Lo, Amnesty, and everyone who signed petitions, put on performances and marched for the dead girls of Juarez. Come back and memorialize those murdered women in a constructive way, by standing by their threatened neighbors – who also are being tossed and buried like garbage, victims of all those familiar and repellent passions unleashed by greed. CP

Debbie Nathan co-authored, with Michael Snedeker, *Satan's Silence: Ritual Abuse and the Making of a Modern American Witch Hunt.* She can be reached at naess2@gmail.com .

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